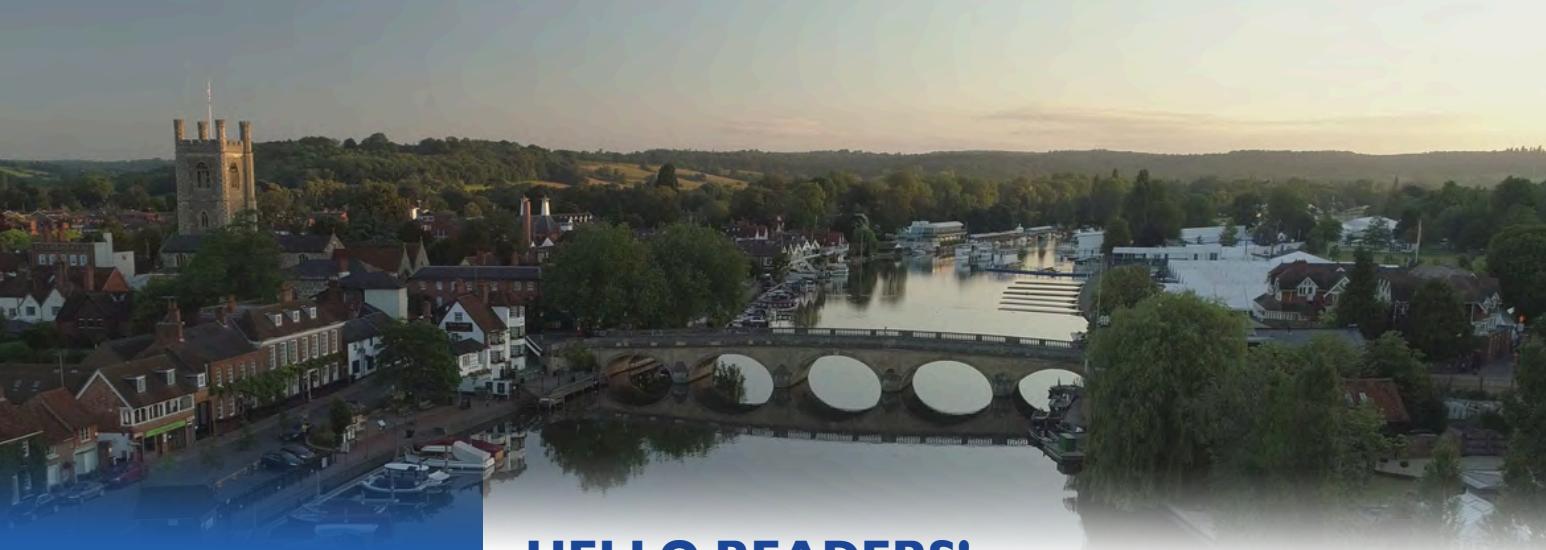




NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2025



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"Did you have trouble landing the Spitfire here?"

HELLO READERS!

Well, I think I can say that Henley's VE DAY 80th anniversary commemorations went off extremely well. It took six months of work and was supported by the Town Council but principally the working committee with Gill Dodds from Henley Town Council, Philippa Ratcliffe from Experience Henley and myself.

The RBL Branch put on a great Victory Tea Party on the anniversary itself, and I'd like personally to thank Karen, Kathy, Ania and Mollie for pulling this off so admirably as it was packed with the maximum number allowed at Menza Café of 60 guests. The Spitfire was a big crowd pleaser and the event was covered well in the media during the build-up by various radio stations and TV news including BBC South, while ITV News covered the children's education day and the Saturday Market Place event.

This was great publicity not just for the town but for the Poppy Appeal itself.

All in all, the three days couldn't have got any better. I'm only just coming down now from the buzz.

TTFN
Richard Pinches.



VE Day logo at Mill Meadows

CONTENTS

List of upcoming events.

RBL event reports.

VE Day 80.



2025 EVENT CALENDAR

Timings - 2nd Thursday every month. Venue - Henley Rugby Club, Menza Cafe. Talk at 11.30am (be seated by 11.20am) and lunch 12.30pm. We very much look forward to seeing you and don't forget that you are welcome to bring guests and gather at the bar from 10.45 a.m. before moving to the adjoining meeting room for the talk and lunch.

Lunch consists of a hot main course or an alternative vegetarian dish, pudding, and coffee/tea.

NB Booking & Payment must be made by the Thursday before the lunch.

Book with Karen by email: kcgrieve@btinternet.com or phone her on 07990 833241. Then pay £18 for the lunch preferably by Bank Transfer to:

RBL Henley	or by cheque	RBL Henley-on-Thames Branch,
Acc 00027756	made out to:	c/o Kathy Bardwell-Springett Branch Treasurer,
Sort Code - 30-94-13		5 The Maltings,
Ref -Lunch		Hart Street, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 2FE.

Car parking - If you would like to park at the Rugby Club we will collect 50p from you on your arrival and pay it into the club for you. Please put a note in your car window saying RBL Lunch.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 28th June 2025

Armed Forces Day in the Market Place for Poppy Appeal.

Thursday 10th July 2025

No meeting due to summer recess.

Trad Boat Fest July 18th-20th

Fawley Meadows Event for Poppy Appeal.

Friday 15th August 2025

VJ Day Victory Tea Party Greenlands, Henley Management College

Thursday 11th Sept 2025

Retired Nettlebed GP, Dr Jim McWhirter, talks about his volunteer work in Uganda with Rotary Doctor Bank where he has worked since 2012 with rural mission hospitals and local Rotary Clubs.

Thursday 9th October 2025

AGM. Tara Macleod, Chair of Board of Trustees & Lottie Pheasant Theatre Manager will give a talk on "The Kenton Theatre – Past, Present & Future".

Sunday 9th Nov 2025

Remembrance Sunday Lunch – No Speaker

Thursday 13th Nov 2025

No meeting due to Poppy Appeal

Monday 15th Dec 2025

Christmas Lunch – No Speaker

SEARCHLIGHT BEER

Brakspear Brewery very kindly ran a special limited edition commemorative bottled beer called 'Searchlight', just for the VE Day events. The small run was just 1,500 bottles. The eye-catching commemorative label is worth buying as a VE Day memento by itself. The beer will be on sale at the Traditional Boat Festival at Fawley Meadows 18th-20th July.



VE DAY 80TH ANNIVERSARY



The event was covered by ITV news crew who filmed during the morning.

The 80th anniversary of VE Day was marked with a spectacular three-day event from 8th to 10th May 2025, blending education, remembrance, and celebration. The town came together to honour the end of World War II in Europe, paying tribute to veterans and educating future generations about the significance of this historic milestone. The commemorations began on 8th May with an Education Day at Henley Town Hall, where over 140 primary school children participated in interactive sessions designed to bring wartime history to life. They explored what daily life was like during the war, learned about rationing, and experienced bomb siren demonstrations. The day also included wartime songs and historical readings, culminating in a traditional fish and chip lunch, a staple meal during the wartime era.

VICTORY TEA PARTY AT MENZA CAFE

The RBL committee organised a fabulous tea party at a packed Menza Cafe and the icing on the cake was a WW2 talk by Dr Michael Redley chairman of the Henley Archaeological and Historical Group on their research about how the war affected Henley and in particular ARP (Air Raid Precautions). This was open to non-members and was over subscribed to the maximum capacity of 60 people.



BEACON LIGHTING AND REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

In the evening, residents gathered at St Mary's Church for a Remembrance Service, attended by local dignitaries and cadets. John Green attended as Royal British Legion standard bearer and Richard Pinches as Chairman gave one of two readings. The service began with church bells ringing out across Henley, symbolising the resilience and unity of the community reflecting the event 80 years ago. At 9:30pm a beacon lighting ceremony was held at Makins Recreation Ground organised and lit by David Eggleton on behalf of the Gainsborough residents synchronised with similar events across the UK, creating a nationwide tribute to those who had fought for freedom.



25 YEAR AWARD

Veteran poppy collector Angelina Jones was presented with a certificate and badge to commemorate her 25 years service to the Poppy Appeal



SWING BAND SETS TOWN HALL ALIGHT!

On 9th May, Henley Town Hall was transformed into a 1940s Dance Hall, recreating the lively wartime gatherings that once provided solace and joy amid the hardships of war. The BIG R 16-piece swing band played classic tunes, while Lindy Hop dancers performed and offered lessons to attendees eager to embrace the spirit of the era. A special address by a Sir Winston Churchill actor was delivered in true wartime style, after arriving in a military motorcade adding to the authenticity of the experience. Guests arrived dressed in 1940s attire, contributing to the immersive atmosphere. The evening's proceeds were donated to the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal, ensuring that the commemoration also contributed to supporting veterans and their families.



SPITFIRE LANDS IN TOWN CENTRE

Saturday 10th May saw Henley Market Place transformed into a living museum, offering visitors a hands-on experience of WWII history. A Mark IX Spitfire took centre stage, allowing people to admire one of the most iconic aircraft of the war. WWII military vehicles, including Jeeps and a 1930s Rolls Royce, were displayed, drawing enthusiasts and history buffs alike.



The 5th Battalion Oxfordshire Home Guard History Group reenacted scenes from wartime Britain, while Special Operations Executive Living History Demonstrations showcased espionage tactics used during the conflict. Visitors also joined guided walks led by the Henley Archaeological & Historical Group, exploring wartime landmarks such as air raid shelters, the Billeting Office, and the British Restaurant, gaining insight into how Henley adapted to the demands of war. There was a Dunkirk little ship offering river trips as well as six 'Long Beam' boats moored at Mill Meadows which held their own displays and thoroughly got into the spirit of the event.



STOP PRESS

The Henley Poppy Appeal has benefited from the VE Day 80 to the sum of over £10,000! The total raised for the year now stands at around £50,000 which is new Henley record.

Thank you Henley for your generosity!